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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATION MEMORANDUM SERIES 0.13

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan

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Attention: Management Training Branch

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Subject: Observation of Group Quarters Enumeration and

LCO Operations in Kansas City, Kansas, on April 25-27, 2000

Introduction

On April 25, 26, and 27, I visited Local Census Office (LCO) 2621 located in Kansas City, Kansas. The purpose of my trip was to observe Group Quarters (GQ) Enumeration and LCO Operations. Since all of the work for this operation was assigned and nearing completion, my observations focused on the office procedures for GQ Enumeration. This report discusses the challenges faced by this LCO staff during the initial phase of data collection and processing.

Initial Meeting

Upon arrival, I met with the Manager of the LCO. He invited me to attend the morning managers' meeting for a brief introduction of the staff and their progress.

At the meeting, the Assistant Manager for Field Operations (AMFO) reported that recruitment and training schedules for the next phase of operations - Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) - were ready. One of the managers expressed concern that only 400 of the 2,800 NRFU Binders

needed for the Field Operations Supervisors were completed. After some discussion, the managers decided to ask workers from the Kansas City, Missouri, LCO to assist in this task. The Special Places Operations Supervisor (SPOS) was my main contact for most of the observation. Before the meeting, she checked the status of the GQ work which had been checked in to the LCO and subsequently checked out from the field to the Data Collection Center (DCC). She printed the reports and calculated the percentages of completed work for each crew leader under her supervision. This LCO checked in 58 percent of its GQ assignments and checked out 50 percent. The SPOS assured the managers that the completion rate would be "right on track" with the April 29 goal of 80 percent checked in and 72 percent checked out. After the meeting, she called the crew leaders to discuss their progress and schedule a meeting to collect completed work.

Meeting With Crew Leader

The SPOS had to travel in order to meet with the crew leaders because of the distance between the enumeration areas and the LCO. On Wednesday, she and I drove approximately forty minutes to a community college to pick up completed forms. While she reviewed the Individual Census Reports (ICRs), I observed the interaction between one crew leader and an enumerator. Although the contact person at a local college dormitory gave the enumerator permission to visit each room with an escort, no escort was available. The crew leader encouraged the enumerator to call the contact person again to schedule a convenient time for distribution and completion of the forms. He told the enumerator to use Administrative Records in place of a respondent's answers only as a last resort.

Another enumerator was falling behind schedule and failed to keep her appointment with the crew leader. As a result, the crew leader reassigned some of her GQs to other enumerators. The enumerators helped each other with the large GQs, especially the prisons, one of which had approximately 2,000 forms to complete. The crew leaders also made themselves available to help where necessary.

Office Processing

The SPOS brought the ICRs to the LCO and immediately checked them in to the computer system using the bar code reader. The process of bar code scanning proved to be beneficial. It virtually eliminates the time-consuming task of entering a long string of numbers by hand and alleviates clerical error.

Next, the office clerks checked the ICRs for completeness and accuracy of the GQ numbers. In order to have uniform four-digit entries, many forms needed to have zeros added to the Person Number in the "For Office Use Only" box on the last page. In a few cases the Person Numbers needed to be adjusted because some individuals listed on the preliminary GQ Listing Sheet were

discharged, released or deceased on April 1. Also, at one of the prisons, names and Person Numbers on the census forms did not match the GQ Listing Sheet because an enumerator and a sworn-in official failed to distribute the questionnaires to the correct rooms as entered on the D-40 envelopes. After the census office clerks corrected this information, the SPOS reviewed the forms and made a preliminary determination of the status for reinterview.

Check Out and Shipping

In the check out process, the bar code was once again scanned and the number of ICRs for each GQ was entered. A computer message, "Reinterview", appeared to inform the person scanning when reinterview was necessary. While I was observing, the cases sent to reinterview included prisons that had more than 100 ICRs and nursing homes whose ICR updated counts differed by more than 10 percent from the original count on the GQ Enumeration Record. One person handled the reinterview process by calling each GQ to confirm the number of persons and resolve any conflicts. If necessary, a return visit was scheduled.

After completing the check out procedures, the staff packed the ICRs in Census-issued brown cardboard boxes and labeled them for shipment to the Pomona DCC or to Jeffersonville. Because only one size box was available, they were shipping boxes that were less than half full. The staff suggested that a second, smaller-sized box would be more efficient.

Equipment and Software Problems

The SPOS noted some problems with the census software. The greatest problem was locating the name of a particular GQ when attempting to make reassignments. Because the list of GQ was not in any particular order, the operator had to scroll through the entire list to find a specific entry. A search capability or an alphabetical listing would prove to be a great asset. Some of the staff also felt that they were not given enough instruction on the use of the software specific to their area. I noticed that some operators were unsure of where to begin a particular task. Persistence usually paid off, but the time could have been lessened with more in-depth training.

Supplies were a minor inconvenience to workers. The mechanical pencils issued for census operations would advance lead too far causing breakage. The erasers were not very effective. On the standard census pencils, the metal band and eraser easily detached from the unit. A better constructed pencil is needed.

A controversy arose regarding the use of pencils in general. There were not enough pencils to fill all of the census envelopes for the GQ Enumeration. However, since the Census Forms D-20A and D-20B state, "Please use a black or blue pen." most of the respondents used ink to complete their questionnaires. If ink was preferred, pencils should not have been distributed.

Upcoming Operations

For the next phase of Census 2000, NRFU, this LCO needed 1,100 enumerators. To anticipate this need and remain on schedule, the AMFO requested that each enumerator interested in working on the next census operation submit a letter in writing. The crew leader and supervisor would review these requests and give recommendations to her. Persons who were reliable and thorough in their work would receive high priority status. Supervisors viewed 'roll-overs', or persons who worked on previous operations, to be an asset since they already had some knowledge of census procedures.

Conclusion

Overall, I thought this LCO was well managed. The Manager kept informed of the progress of all census operations through daily meetings and personal communication. He was available to answer questions, offer problem-solving advice, and give assistance where needed. With his guidance, the staff was able to overcome equipment and software problems and to complete census procedures on schedule.

The SPOS preparedness for GQ Enumeration was evident in the clear and concise manner she gave directions to the staff. The tasks were well-organized, distributed and executed with little problem.

Observing the GQs Enumeration phase of Census 2000 was a great learning experience for me. It has given me a better understanding of the difficulties field workers and office personnel experience in the initial stages of data collection and processing.

cc:

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